

Rochester City School District Board of Education



Board of Education

May 2, 2020

President

Van Henri White

Dear Chancellor Rosa, Interim Commissioner Tahoe, Assistant Commissioner Myers-Small, and Assistant Commissioner Alvarez:

Vice President

Cynthia Elliott

Friday afternoon, in an effort to address SED's concerns regarding the Rochester International Academy's (RIA) Transition Plan for 2020-21, the leadership team from Central Office, several Board of Education members, and staff from Rochester International Academy met.

Members

Ricardo Adams

Beatriz LeBron

Amy Maloy

Willa Powell

Natalie Sheppard

First, all agreed that while RIA was as wonderful program (run by an exceptional team of educators), we also understood that there have been far too many instances where students stayed longer at RIA than is allowed under state and federal guidelines.

District Clerk

Marisol O. Ramos-Lopez

Accordingly, we all agreed that, going forward, our leadership team at Central Office and at RIA will need to ensure that there is strict compliance and adherence to those guidelines. More specifically, the RCSD we follow the New York State Education Department's RIA Transitional plan for grades 7 - 12 that was received today and has been discussed with RCSD's leadership team.

Superintendent of Schools

Terry J. Dade

While there was unanimous agreement on the need to follow SED's transitional plan for RIA, there was, however, also a shared concern that if we terminate the K-6 program at RIA without adequate notice to these children and families (who are already experiencing the trauma of trying to navigate through COVID-19), that such an abrupt termination might be especially harmful to these very young children.

All of those present at the meeting were especially concerned that the lack of face to face interaction since schools closed several weeks ago (coupled with the language barrier that still exist for many of these families) will mean that many of these children will not be afforded an authentic way of being informed about the change of programming.

Accordingly, we are asking that SED consider the possibility of allowing those children (presently enrolled in RIA K-6) to have a year of transition during the 2020-21 school year.

In addition to avoiding the trauma that would accompany such an abrupt transition, using 21-22 as the year of transition would give these students and their families a meaningful opportunity to choose their new school.*

Any consideration you would give this proposal would be greatly appreciated, as it represents our collective team's best effort to protect the children and families of RIA in their successful transition into schools throughout the RCSD.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Van H. White', written in a cursive style.

Van H. White
President

** Our school choice selection process was completed some time ago. Therefore, if the transition were to occur during the 20-21 school year, many of these children and their families would be relegated to accepting their second or third choices because they have already missed the school choice enrollment period.*